

MINUTES

Attendance

Members Present: Bruce Carson, Jonathan O'Keeffe

Members Absent: Eduardo Suarez

Select Board Liaison: Diana Stein

Planning Department Staff: Jonathan Tucker, Christine Brestrup

Other Planning Board Members: Denise Barberet

Others Participating: Matthew Cornell, Walter Wolnik

Discussion

The meeting was called to order at 5:10 PM.

The Subcommittee approved the minutes from its 2/18/09 meeting by consensus.

The Subcommittee discussed the proposed article relating to taxi and limousine services, reviewing the revisions from its previous meeting, and making several minor modifications to the grammar on the suggestion of Ms. Barberet. The Subcommittee voted 2-0 in support of recommendation of the article by the Planning Board at the Public Hearing to be held later in the evening.

The Subcommittee reviewed the status of the proposed amendment to extend the Municipal Parking District northwards. There was discussion of feedback received from Wayne Feiden, Director of Planning and Development in Northampton, regarding the city's experience with an option to provide payments in lieu of the provision of parking spaces that would otherwise be required in the Central Business District. Mr. Feiden indicated that this option had been successful in encouraging denser development in the downtown business district and in increasing utilization of the city's municipal parking system, but that the revenue generated was a secondary impact and not a significant aspect of the plan. The city had originally set the amount at \$16,000 per space, and gradually reduced it to its current level of \$2,000 in order to encourage broader use of the program. Mr. O'Keeffe and Mr. Carson both indicated that they saw the requirement for payment as something that could lead to the provision of excessive parking area, and were not inclined to pursue that option.

Ms. Barberet expressed opposition to the inclusion of any residential properties in the proposed expansion. Mr. Tucker indicated that the proposed properties were predominately multi-unit properties on small lots, and that more flexible parking regulations might eventually lead lots being combined and space being used more efficiently.

The Subcommittee discussed a new proposal for an amendment to modify footnote b of the table of dimensional regulations to remove the frontage requirement for residential units in the B-G and B-VC districts. Mr. Tucker explained that the amendments adopted the previous fall, which removed the requirements for Basic Minimum Lot Area and Additional Lot Area in these districts, had been intended to encourage denser residential development in these business districts at the core of downtown and village centers, but by not also removing the frontage requirement, the majority of existing properties in the core downtown area were not able to take advantage of these provisions, since their lots did not have the required frontage (and some lots had no frontage at all). He characterized the

failure to propose removal of the frontage requirement in the earlier amendment as a gap in the earlier amendment, which could be rectified by removing the frontage requirement now.

Mr. O'Keeffe mentioned that he generally opposes introducing new articles for consideration late in the planning process for each Town Meeting cycle, but supported this proposed amendment because he felt that the goals of the fall 2008 amendment, which had widespread support, could not be achieved without removing the frontage requirement. Ms. Brestrup asked about the possibility of reducing the frontage requirement rather than eliminating it. Mr. Tucker said that doing so would help lots with smaller frontage, but would still prohibit residential development in lots that lacked frontage altogether. Ms. Brestrup asked about public safety access to development on such lots, and Mr. Tucker indicated that that is addressed as part of the SP/SPR process for any proposed development. Ms. Barberet indicated that she might support the proposal in the B-G district, but didn't think it was necessary in the B-VC districts, and also said that it was too late in the process to propose additional articles. The Subcommittee voted 2-0 to include the article on the list of warrant articles, subject to further discussion and a review by Town Counsel.

The Subcommittee considered the proposal for Main/High/Dickinson rezoning and the creation of a new B-N (Neighborhood Business) zoning district. Mr. Tucker explained that based on previous discussions about the property currently housing the Chevrolet dealership, staff felt that it might be more appropriate to zone this parcel as B-L, in contrast to the original proposal which left the parcel with its current COM zoning. Mr. Tucker indicated that B-L would allow the dealership as a conforming use, preventing problems with introducing nonconformity which would have been created by zoning it as B-N or by other options, and would provide more restrictions on potential future uses of the parcel as compared to its current COM designation. Mr. Cornell, whose property is adjacent to the dealership on Dickinson Street, supported the idea of zoning this parcel B-L instead of COM, but felt that other properties along Dickinson should be kept as COM as well. He told the Subcommittee that the existing COM zoning was a major feature of the property when he acquired it, and that rezoning to B-N would take away options allowed under COM, potentially making his property less valuable. Mr. O'Keeffe said that his sense was that the existing COM zoning was inappropriate given the character of the neighborhood today, and that the issues generated by the presence of the dealership today could be exacerbated if other high-intensity uses allowed under COM zoning were to take place in this neighborhood.

At the end of the meeting, the Subcommittee briefly reviewed ongoing discussions of potential upcoming revisions to the FPC district boundaries based on a new aerial survey to take place later in 2009, along with preliminary ideas for replacement of the Phased Growth bylaw.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 PM. The next Zoning Subcommittee meeting was scheduled for March 18, 2009.

Respectfully submitted,

Jonathan O'Keeffe, Subcommittee member

[Minutes approved 3/18/09]